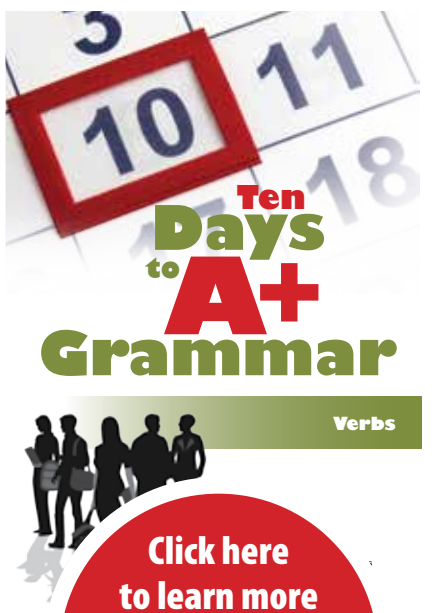




Ten Days to A+  
Grammar™

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# Ten Days to A+ Grammar

**Verbs**



by Cheryl Miller Thurston



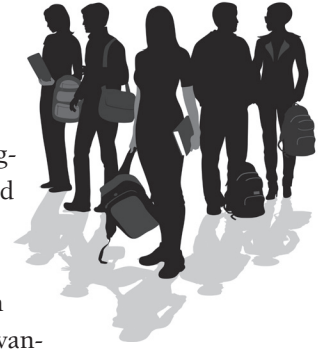
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## Introduction



**T**EN DAYS TO A+ GRAMMAR: VERBS helps students understand how important verbs are in the English language. Through a variety of lessons and exercises, students will learn to identify and use verbs more effectively.

They will learn how carefully chosen verbs can add life to their writing and the importance of consistency and accuracy in verb tense. In addition, students will learn the differences between regular and irregular verbs and how to navigate those differences. The Unit will also cover the advantages of using active voice over passive to strengthen writing. Finally, students will learn how to choose correctly when it comes to troublesome verbs, such as *sit* and *set*.

*Ten Days to A+ Grammar: Verbs* takes a practical approach to verb usage, teaching what students most need to know about verbs and how to use them correctly and effectively in speech and writing.

Many students are often baffled and turned off when lessons begin with a great deal of grammatical terminology. These lessons do not emphasize the terminology, except where needed, as in, for example, the differences between *linking* and *helping* verbs. However, some familiarity with subjects, predicates, punctuation, parts of speech, etc., is assumed. In addition, various aspects of verbs such as knowing all the tenses or the emphatic form are beyond the needs of the students for whom these lessons are intended. Other information, such as verb phrases or verbs that could be used as either action or linking verbs (i.e., look, seem, appear, etc.,) are dealt with, but not in great detail.

One aspect of *Ten Days to A+ Grammar: Verbs* that is different from the other Units in this series is that Day #5 offers the teacher a choice, depending upon the individual class and its needs:

- 5A. review what has been covered already, along with some assessment possibilities;
- 5B. an overview of additional tenses and how they influence the time factor of a sentence.

The packet contents at a glance:

1. Pretest and “Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?”
2. Reviewing verbs—what they are, how they are used, and why they are important
3. Reviewing helping and linking verbs and setting the stage for verb tenses
4. Helping students understand what verb tenses are and why they should not needlessly switch tenses
- 5A. Review of the first week of verbs
- 5B. Helping students recognize that changes in verb tense affect meaning and placement in time
6. Helping students understand the difference between regular and irregular verbs
7. Helping students use irregular verbs and troublesome verbs correctly
8. Helping students learn the difference between active and passive voice—and learn to write in active voice for most purposes
9. Reviewing what students have learned about verbs in *10 Days to A+ English: Verbs*
10. Final test

## **DAY #1: Teacher Instructions**

### **Objectives:**

- To assess how well students understand verbs and how to use them correctly
- To assess how well students understand the basics of verb tense
- To assess students' ability to use regular and irregular verbs correctly, as well as troublesome verbs, such as sit/set
- To assess how well students can recognize active voice and its superiority over passive voice for most purposes

### **Activities:**

1. **Pretest.** Give students the pretest, “Verbs.”
2. **Overview.** After students finish the pretest, provide a brief overview of what will happen over the next ten days. Students will complete a quick review of verbs and why they are important. They will learn about verb tense, regular and irregular verbs, and handling troublesome verbs correctly. They will also learn to make their own writing more effective by choosing verbs carefully and writing in active voice.
3. **Lesson.** Present “Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.

While the message of the lesson is important, it is *very* important that the teacher handle it carefully. While it is true that poor language skills often lead others to think a person is poorly educated or even not very bright, it is important that students understand that such a stereotype isn't necessarily true. Of course, there are brilliant people in the world who have poor language skills, and there are poorly educated people who have brilliant language skills. However, people with poor language skills often encounter limitations in their ability to influence others, to gain respect, and to become successful.

**DAY #1: Lesson****Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?**

When writers want to suggest that a character is uneducated or not very bright, what is one of the first things they do?

They have the character say something ungrammatical:

*“He don’t live here no more.”*

*“I ain’t telling you none of that.”*

*“I bringed the money like you ask.”*

Audiences get the message.

**Why is that?** It is because of *assumptions* we have about language. We may not be consciously aware of these assumptions, but they exist in our culture. We expect people who have gone to school to speak and write in certain ways. We expect intelligent people to use a certain kind of language. Like it or not, we associate poor grammar with lack of education or low intelligence—even if we aren’t aware of doing so.

This association may not be fair. It may not be right. It may not even be true most of the time. The association of poor language skills with low education or low intelligence, however, is an association that is widely held. People perceive it to be true.

That brings up the #1 reason why we study language rules in school: Getting an education involves meeting certain expectations, and one of those expectations is learning to use language correctly.

If you hate studying grammar rules, you may be thinking, “Well, I don’t care. It just simply doesn’t matter to me.” That may be true, but what if it *does* matter, someday? What if you are in line for a great job, and strong communication skills will help you? What if you want to change a law in your town, or you want to explain yourself in a court case? What if you want to make a good impression on your future spouse’s parents? What if you simply want to tell others your ideas? Maybe the language you use won’t matter—but what if it does? The truth is that most people, throughout their lives, need to tap into the power of words. If they can use words well, they are ahead of the game. If they can’t, they may have a much more difficult time earning respect for their ideas.

**Respect can lead to power.** People who can communicate well often have opportunities denied to others. There is power in words. Here are three real-life examples. They are true, though the names have been changed.

**Case #1.** Sue Atkinson was a passenger on an airplane, and two people brought their 95-year-old father with them to sit in the exit row. The man was clearly having problems both walking and knowing where he was, and it was quite clear that he would be unable to help in an emergency—something that is required of those sitting in the exit row. The flight attendants tried to get him to move, but the people with him were adamant, saying only, “He’s fine.” He clearly was *not* fine, yet no one was willing to make a fuss and have him moved.

## **DAY #2: Teacher Instructions**

### **Objectives:**

- To review what verbs are
- To help students see how important verbs are to communication

### **Activities:**

1. **Lesson.** Present the lesson “Verbs, Verbs, Verbs.” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.

Go over Exercises A, B, and C with the class as a whole, having volunteers read aloud what they have written. Alternatively, you might give students the original version of Exercise A and have them put verbs in it, which will allow them to see the importance of using good, specific verbs to help illustrate a story.

Then, have students begin “Verbs Bring Stories to Life,” completing it as homework.

**DAY #2: Lesson**

**Verbs, Verbs, Verbs**

You've studied verbs nearly every year you have been in school. What do you remember about them? Let's make a list.

They show action. Every sentence has to have one. They can often end in -ing or -ed. One type of verb is called a *helping verb*. Verbs help make a statement. They can link subjects to something else about the subject. They make things interesting, etc.

Give some examples of words that can be used as action verbs.

*jump, laugh, run, skip, find, etc.*

Give some examples of words that can be used as helping verbs.

*is, be, am, are, was, were, been, has, have, had, do, does, did, can, could, shall, should, will, would, may, might, must, being*

**Exercise A: Leave out the verbs.** To show how important verbs are in our language, let's do an experiment. Write one paragraph about what happens when a babysitter named Joy tries to take care of four-year-old twins Mike and Sam while they play in a sandbox, but fight over a truck. Supply some details about the encounter, but use no verbs at all. This will probably be difficult to do and will show you the importance of verbs.

Let's hear how you did.

The following is one possibility that students might write or one you can present to the class:

*Joy beside the sandbox on a lounge chair. Twins Mike and Sam in sandbox. Mike and Sam over Mike's dump truck or Sam's dump truck. Sam Mike on the head with the Tonka truck. His head and he crying. Joy out of her chair. She them in and quickly to the emergency room where Mike three stitches. Sam in big trouble.*

Obviously, it's pretty hard to tell a story without verbs.

**Exercise B: Put them back.** Now, go back and put verbs into the story you just tried to tell.

*Joy was sitting in a lounge chair watching the twins, Mike and Sam, playing in a sandbox with a dump truck. Mike and Sam started fighting over whether the dump truck was Mike's or Sam's. Sam hit Mike on the head with the Tonka truck. His head started bleeding, and he began crying. Joy jumped out of her chair. She buckled them in and quickly drove to the emergency room, where Mike received three stitches. Sam was in big trouble.*

As you can see, it is much easier to tell the story with verbs.

**Exercise C. Find more interesting verbs.** Look at the story you wrote. What verbs could you replace with more interesting ones? For example, maybe you originally wrote that Mike *hit* Sam on the head. Replacing *hit* with *whacked* creates a better picture of what happened.

*Instead of "Joy separated the two boys and said they should share the dump truck," students might write "Joy separated the two boys and demanded that they should share the dump truck. Instead of "Joy drove quickly," substitute "Joy raced."*



## DAY #3: Teacher Instructions

### Objectives:

- To review helping verbs and linking verbs
- To have students understand what constitutes a “verb phrase”
- To set the stage for verb tenses

### Activities:

1. **Homework.** Have several students read aloud their homework, “Verbs Bring Stories to Life.” Discuss the verbs chosen and have students point out the more interesting verbs used.
2. **Lesson.** Present the lesson “Helping Verbs and Linking Verbs.” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.

Go over Exercises A, B, C, and D with the class as a whole. Students may have some trouble with Exercise D, which is designed to be effective in helping them review verbs. First, they write the simplest of all sentences—two-word sentences that consist of a subject and a verb. Then, they write sentences with a subject and two-, three-, and-four word verb phrases—nothing more. What they should discover is that they will need to use helping verbs in order to write sentences that fit the specifications listed.

What students will also have written, after the two-word sentences, is sentences in different tenses. If there is time, ask students to compare some of the sentences and discuss the differences in meaning. For example, how does “He is running” differ from “He has been running” or “He will be running”?



**DAY #3: Lesson**

**Helping Verbs and Linking Verbs**

As you have learned, we usually think of verbs as words that express an action:

*jump, smile, think, sip, run, climb, believe, etc.*

There are other verbs that do not express action. They are called *helping verbs*, because they are used to complete and give more information about other verbs, “helping” them along, in a sense. Here are some examples:

had *jumped*

was *smiling*

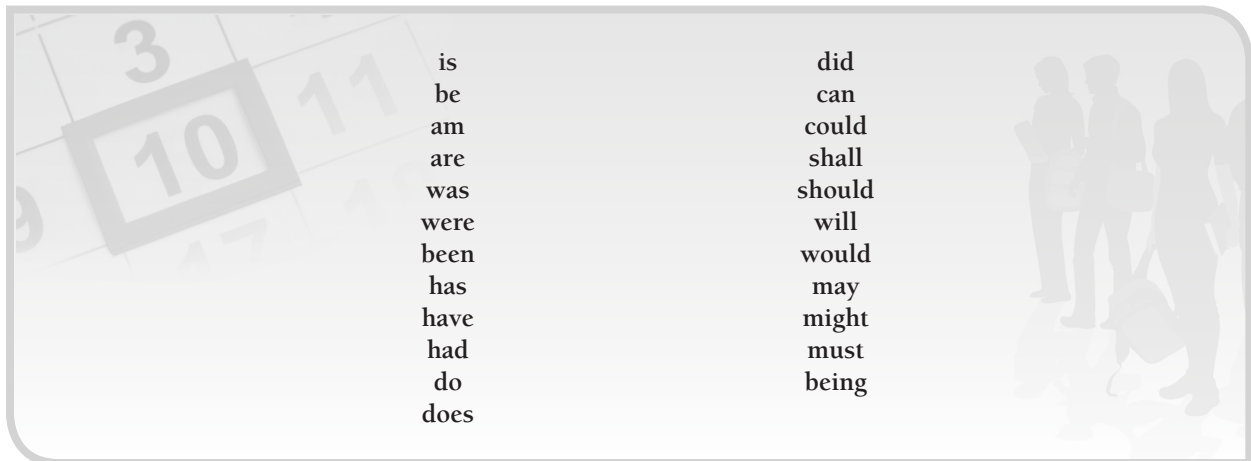
will *sip*

would have been *thinking*

has been *running*

will be *climbing*

Here is a list of all the helping verbs:



is	did
be	can
am	could
are	shall
was	should
were	will
been	would
has	may
have	might
had	must
do	being
does	

## **DAY #4: Teacher Instructions**

### **Objectives:**

- To add to student understanding of linking verbs
- To help students understand the basic verb tenses and how they are used
- To help students understand that they should not switch back and forth between tenses

### **Activities:**

1. **Lesson.** Review linking verbs by explaining that some action verbs are used as linking verbs. Then, present the lesson “Don’t be Tense about Tenses.” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.

Complete Exercises A and B with the class as a whole. Then, have students do Exercise C individually. Go over the correct answers and discuss.

**DAY #4: Lesson**

**Linking or Action**

Remember from yesterday that a linking verb joins parts of the sentence. You also have a list of the main linking verbs, such as be, are, etc. However, some verbs seem like action, but are really linking.

Here are two similar sentences:

*The magician suddenly appeared on the stage. *Appeared* is an action verb. Where did he appear?*

*The magician suddenly appeared nervous. *Appeared* is a linking verb. How did he appear?*

In general, if a form of *to be* can substituted for the verb, it is a linking verb; otherwise, it is action.

Try that on these sentences to see if you have a linking or an action verb.

*He looked at the horse.*

*He looked smart.*

*We smelled the cookies.*

*The cookies smelled delicious.*

In each pair, the first verb is action, and the second is linking. Try the substitution rule to make sure.

*He looked at the horse.*

*He looked smart.*

He was at the horse. NO. *Looked* is action.

He was smart. YES. *Looked* is linking.

*We smelled the cookies.*

*The cookies smelled delicious.*

We were the cookies. NO. *Smelled* is action.

The cookies were delicious. YES. *Smelled* is linking.